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INSPIRE: a proposal for its future development

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SCONUL 2010 Conference



INSPIRE - a proposal for its future development

INSPIRE - a proposal for its future development



Background

Inspire is a project that has been established to support “libraries in working together to improve access to information and learning for all”. Participating libraries are committed to supporting learning in its widest sense and together they provide an open route to the information library users are seeking, wherever it may be found.

It was instituted in 2004 under the energetic leadership of Mary Heaney (formerly Director of Learning Centres at the University of Wolverhampton and now Director of Services at Manchester Metropolitan University) and Andrew Green (then Head of Libraries & Information Services, Coventry City Council and now Head of Library and Heritage Service, Wandsworth Council). Mary resigned her role with Inspire in 2006 and was replaced by Philip Payne, (Librarian, Birkbeck College). Sally Curry is its Inspire National Partnerships Manager.

Funding was provided by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, the Museums Libraries and Archives Council, the British Library, SCONUL and the Society of Chief Librarians.

Inspire is also supported by the Committee on Library Cooperation in Ireland (COLICO), the National Library of Scotland, the National Library of Wales, the Chartered Institute of Library & Information Professionals, and the Colleges of Further & Higher Education.

From vision to reality

Two pilot schemes were run in 2004 and these were followed by a two year programme to extend Inspire to libraries from all sectors across the whole of England. There are now over 3500 Inspire libraries throughout England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Inspire libraries include public, higher education and national libraries plus further education libraries, health related libraries and a wide range of specialist libraries. Together they provide an extraordinarily rich and varied resource of information on every subject from Accountancy to Zoology, in the process facilitating access to the universal collection of knowledge - and they are open to all to use.

- Extended existing networks of successful access partnerships and added new ones so creating a single national access route to information, irrespective of geography
- Ensured that learners can have access to the most appropriate learning materials irrespective of the status of the learner or the location of the materials
- Provided greater opportunities and access for socially excluded individuals and groups

Through this work, Inspire has fulfilled key aspects of the Museums Libraries and Archives Council's Framework for the Future 2013 vision which had as one of its objectives that any member of a public library can also access materials held in higher education (HE) and further education (FE) libraries. The programme also relates directly to many Government initiatives on widening participation, life long learning and social inclusion.

Findit

To make access to this information easier, the Findit website was created as part of the Inspire programme. The website is one of the central pillars of the Inspire programme to support learners and learning and allows anyone to identify, quickly and easily -

- which libraries hold resources on specific subjects
- where these libraries are
- what the terms are for visitors to access those resources.

Inspire is effectively creating a distributed national library available to everyone.

Funding

Inspire's 2004 pilot projects were funded by the Department for Education and Skills (DFES) in co-operation with the Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS). The 2004-6 Inspire Programme was funded by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, the Regional Libraries Advisory Group (sponsored by the BL, CILIP, MLA Council), and through the DCMS Action Plan supporting Framework for the Future, the public library strategy to 2013. At the end of 2006, the MLA and other sponsors allowed the Inspire Directors to continue to use remaining funds to further Inspire's aims of widening access to information and learning.

Some of the library co-operative schemes linked to Inspire:

Access Salford
Access to Learning Libraries and Information in Northamptonshire
Addlib Cumbria
Inspire Northeast
Libraries Access Sunderland Scheme
Libraries and Information East Midlands
Libraries and Learners in London
Milton Keynes, Learning City Libraries Network
SYALL South Yorkshire Access to Libraries for Learning
Welcome!
Kirklees and Calderdale

Governance

Inspire has two Directors who are also members of the Management Board viz.,

Philip Payne, Librarian, Birkbeck College (nominated by SCONUL)

Andrew Green, former Head of Libraries & Information Services, Coventry City Council and now Head of Library and Heritage Service, Wandsworth Council (nominated by the Society of Chief Librarians)

They are supported by a Management Board representing the interests of all the funders and a wide range of libraries in the UK and its membership also includes:

Inspire Support, Sally Curry, Robinson Library, University of Newcastle upon Tyne

British Library, Stephanie Kenna, Manager Regional & Library Programmes

Devolved Administrations and SCURL, Chris Pinder, Director of Learning and Information Services, Napier University

Northern Ireland & LISC(NI) Inspire, Elaine Urquhart, Assistant Director, University of Ulster, COLICO Chair

Libraries and Information East Midlands and The Combined Regions (TCR), Lynn Hodgkins, Regional Librarian, LIEM

National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, Richard Crabb

Society of Chief Librarians, Martin Burton, Head of Libraries & Information Services, South Gloucestershire

Society of College, National and University Libraries, John Lancaster, Director of Computing & Library Services, University of Huddersfield

South West Regional Library Service (SWRLS) and TCR, Lynne Osborne, Director SWRLS

The future

Inspire is a wonderful resource that has an important role in supporting education, employability, enterprise and employment. More specifically Inspire has a role in supporting life long learning, CPD, the public library service, the HEFCE shared services agenda, widening participation programmes, community development and much more. Individually many libraries and information services are modest in size – but collectively are a remarkable resource of great diversity and richness. Some of the ideas we are discussing include a national Inspire card, a national virtual library for the general public, the development of partnership agreements with key organisations and the further development of the Findit web presence.

Nevertheless our funding is gradually being depleted and a sustainable funding arrangement is now urgently required.

Local activity

The WELCOME! Scheme: improving access to libraries in Kirklees and Calderdale

The WELCOME! scheme facilitates access by the general public to a wide range of library and information services across the Kirklees and Calderdale areas. Its membership includes the following:

University of Huddersfield

Kirklees Libraries

Kirklees College – Huddersfield

Kirklees College – Dewsbury

Calderdale and Kirklees Careers

Huddersfield New College

Greenhead College

Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS Trust

Calderdale College

Calderdale Libraries

Public Health Resource Centre (Dewsbury Hospital)

Public Health Resource Centre (Calderdale PCT)

The WELCOME! scheme website provides information on organisations across Kirklees and Calderdale that offer information, library and study facilities to help adults in the area.

In order to maintain the quality of this service WELCOME! members have all signed up to a set of standards.

Further information can be obtained by consulting the website at <http://welcome.hud.ac.uk/> or emailing the project coordinators: Andrew Walsh or Stephen Kee at welcome@hud.ac.uk



Society of College,
National and University
Libraries